EVERYBODY'S BODY.

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"Two wee children rushed out." *p. 98.*

CHAPTER I.

NEIGHBOURS ON THE GREEN.

THERE are many places worse than "Ploughman's Green" even yet. Its oldest inhabitant will admit that, though not without a shake of the head, and a few lamentations over its sad changes for the worse since the day when it lay unenclosed beside a real country road, along which the big market carts rolled heavily in the early morning hours, their sleepy drivers almost invisible in their huge loads of greenery. In those days there had even been wild rose-bushes on Ploughman's Green, and it had given pasture to any sheep, donkey or goat which happened to belong to any of the inhabitants of the quaint little houses that stood about on its margin, in straggling groups, like gossipping neighbours.

Now-a-days, the dear old country road is paved, and watered and gas-lit. The Green is encircled by chains dependent from blue posts with white heads. The wild rose-bushes are replaced by a few stiff flower beds, and the sound of the lawn mower is often heard. Most of the quaint little houses are gone, pushed out of existence by handsome villas, described in advertisements as of "good elevation, and fitted with every modern improvement."

Some of the inhabitants of these new villas resent the existence of the few old houses lingering out the remnant of their days. They are occupied, say these genteel folk, by "such a different class of people." Fancy a commission agent's family having to give an address to which a clear starcher has equal rights! The first may call their mansion "Capulet Lodge," while the other's is only humble "No. 10," but both have a common property in "Ploughman's Green." And the commission agent's daughters, the Misses Blythe, think that "Ploughman's Green" is vulgar in its very self. Why should it not rather be "Peer's Garden"?

Is there not an ancient local tradition that a certain great nobleman once grew his cabbages here ?

But though there is far too much of the spirit of Capulet Lodge abroad in the neighbourhood, it has not been able wholly to destroy the primitive simplicity and charm of the Green. As long as it retains any existence there will be more sunshine and sweeter air there than in the long, narrow, prim streets which now open on every side around it. After the arid and stony glaringness of the long London road, where shops have been built over the front gardens which were once so trim and sightly, the sleek sward of Ploughman's Green greets the eye "like an oasis in a desert."

At any rate, that is the phrase which little Mr. Pyper repeated to himself every summer evening, as on his return from the City, he gained his first glimpse of the enclosure and its poplar trees.

Mr. Pyper was a little gentleman whose appearance at a distance was oddly suggestive of an old fashioned-looking boy. His face was round in form and fresh in colour; his eyes were blue, and his lips often screwed up as if he were just going to give vent to a whistle of surprise and delight. His hair was of the softly rippling kind, and so fair and delicate in hue that it was not easy to see how far the silver had intruded on the gold. Even his clothes aided the illusion, for his garments always had something of a juvenile cut. Just now, they chanced to be precisely of the style in vogue among dandy schoolboys. Mr. Pyper did not try to look young. He had simply never thought about growing old, and he had worn much the same style of garment for about forty years, during which period fashion had brought him to the top of her wheel about three times without his ever noticing the fact.

As soon as his figure came trotting up the side of the Green, the door of one of the smallest of the old cottages opened and two wee children rushed out, with a clatter of the little garden gate and a perfect riot of welcome. No grandpapa on the Green ever got such a warm greeting as met this old bachelor every evening. On this occasion, it might be a little noisier than usual, because the tiny brother and sister (it was hard to know which was boy and which girl !) were freshly arrayed in bran new Holland overalls, touched up with Turkey red collars and braiding, of which they were mightily proud, and for which, of course, they wished to claim their old friend's sympathetic admiration. He knew how to gratify them.

"What!" he cried, "what in the name of wonder is coming to meet me! Not Tony and Tina? No, no! I wonder where *they* can be? For these are two little boxes neatly done up for travelling by road or rail. Yes, by road or rail! I wonder what can be in them? Oh, I know! They are sauceboxes, and they have got to pay duty—ten kisses apiece!"

The Misses Blythe, seated in their open bow window, saw the little scene, and gave a smile of acid superiority at the mild joke. They had a visitor this afternoon, a young Mrs. Harrison, who had arrived on the Green as a bride only a few weeks before. Her rather fashionable trousseau and the smart arrangement of her window curtains had commended her for a call from the Capulet Lodge family. This was her return visit. In her hands she held a smart mother-of-pearl card case, one of her wedding gifts.

"It is ridiculous to see the fuss those children make over that old man," observed Miss Blythe, craning her long neck to watch the group. "I wonder he allows the little monkeys to take such liberties."

"Oh, grandpapas and great uncles are generally very indulgent," said Mrs. Harrison, who just now was inclined to see the sunnier side of life and human nature.

"Mr. Pyper is no relation of the Comptons," replied Miss Blythe. "He is only their lodger. Do you know Mrs. Compton?" she inquired of her guest, with a sudden change of voice, and the apologetic explanation of the question, "I suppose you must, since you live next door—very awkward for houses of such different type to be so near! —and the garden walls are none too high." The Blythes lived in the best house on the Green, and they never mentioned anything appertaining to it save with a fine disparagement, which put it, so to speak, completely beneath their feet.

The little bride caught the cue held out to her, and admitted just such an involuntary acquaintance with Mrs. Compton, who had been "very civil" in the matter of some handkerchiefs which had been blown from Mrs. Harrison's washing line. She thought Mrs. Compton was "a very nice person," for she had come to the rescue when the bride and her raw servant had been in a terrible pickle over a refractory kitchen stove. "But as she has never called, of course I can't," she added with the punctilious precision of a young housekeeper with a new card-case.

"I don't suppose Mrs. Compton studies social civility," said Miss Olivia Blythe, "I should not think she is that sort of person at all."

"There is something strange about the family—and I daresay it is about her," decided the elder sister. "When a man, getting a good salary, chooses to live in a little den like that—five cupboards and a coal-hole—and rather than keep a servant turns his wife into a regular drudge, there must be some reason for it. He must know it is all she is fit for."

"Does Mr. Compton get a very good salary, do you think?" asked Mrs. Harrison. She was always jealous lest anybody should be better appreciated than her Sydney. "I do not even know what he is," she added.

"Oh, he is with Buff and Crewe, the great electricians," answered Miss Blythe. "My father says it is a pretty good berth, and anyhow they are well enough off to pay income-tax. For she was paying it at the office when I was paying ours."

"Susannah knows everything about everybody," was the admiring aside of the younger sister.

"Perhaps they have had trouble, and are clearing off debt," suggested Mrs. Harrison, an expression of anxiety flickering across her pretty little face. The Harrisons had procured their own nice furniture on the "three years' system." The young couple had thought this a grand expedient, but even already it had presented itself in other aspects.

"I don't know what they could have got into debt for," snapped Miss Susannah. "Their goods are as old as the hills, and of the homeliest kind. The food which goes in is the plainest possible. I never see the butcher call. I suppose Mrs. Compton does the marketing."

"Well, at any rate," said Mrs. Harrison, "they seem nice, decent people; it's a pleasure to see the whole houseful turn out for church." She paused with a little pang of reflection on her own Sabbaths; for her Sydney "did not believe in making a point of church-going." As a bridegroom, he had said "of course he would go to please her, when there was no good reason otherwise." But, somehow, as matter of fact, they were always late on Sundays, and Sydney was so peevish over their start, and so critical of the sermon

and the singing, that she grew little inclined to urge her wish, and more ready to adopt her husband's pet dogma "that church-going isn't religion." Of course it is not. Neither is eating health. But what would become of health if we discontinued to take food? Are we healthy when we lose appetite? Is it a good sign when we are not ready for our regular meals?

"On Sunday evenings, we can all hear plenty of hymn-singing," observed Miss Olivia, with a malicious emphasis.

"Well, for my part," said Miss Susannah, "I never think the more of people when they set up to be particularly good."

"Not that we know anything against the Comptons, I'm sure," put in Miss Olivia. "Indeed, we don't know anything about them at all. I don't suppose we should have anything in common. I daresay the wife may have been nothing worse than a respectable servant. She looks a wiry creature used to hard work. She is to be envied," decided the lady, but in a tone which implied "She is to be despised."

Then Mrs. Harrison bethought her that she must take her departure, as her husband would soon be home.

The Misses Blythe rose, protesting "Must she really go? Ah, well, perhaps it was her duty, poor dear. Do what one may, men grow cool towards their homes soon enough, but one must not be the first to fail. And you mustn't begin fretting when he's a little late, dear. Don't let him find you waiting, for waiting is sure to make you peevish. Run over here whenever you like, and leave word with your girl that Mr. Harrison can come and fetch you. He's a fine-spirited, handsome young fellow, your husband, and you mustn't expect him not to have ways of his own."

Mrs. Harrison returned to her own home, feeling uncomfortable and irritated, as if all the eyes of Ploughman's Green were directed towards her, and all its voices whispering unfavourable criticism. And Sydney was already twenty minutes behind his usual time. Oh, yes, she supposed Sydney was already getting tired of her. Well, she wouldn't fret, not she!—and as she said so the tears came into her eyes. Why, that very morning Sydney had grumbled at the way his breakfast was prepared. She had said they would have to pay higher wages if they were to expect good cooking, and Sydney had actually asked if she couldn't look after it a little herself. She had said she was trying to do her best, and all had passed off quite pleasantly. But now she thought she saw the drift of things, Sydney wanted to turn her into a mere drudge. And she was sure she was not strong—and she had never been used to hard work, and could not be expected to know much of house-keeping, since she and her "pa" (a thriftless and not over-steady commercial traveller) had always lived in furnished apartments.

Mrs. Harrison was a kindly little creature full of good intentions. She loved her Sydney, and had indulged in many an ignorant but genuine aspiration towards ideal wifehood. But this evening somehow she felt a lonely, desolate, uncomfortable being, who would have to resort to that most melancholy duty of "taking care of one's self." She ascribed her unhappy feelings to Sydney's keeping her waiting, to the incompetence of her servant, to the injustice and crookedness of everything in general—to anything, in short, but their real cause, to wit, the spirit pervading the conversation of the Misses Blythe.

It takes much wiser people than our little bride to trace the true origin of their moods. The visit we have just made, the companion we have chatted with, the book we have read, are seldom credited with the influence which they really possess, be it for good or evil. "By their fruits," or effects, we "shall know them" is a simple rule by which our own state of mind may test what is wholesome or unwholesome for us. Blessings on those friends—personal or printed—who send us on our way braver, brighter, more resolute in all things good. We can never have too many such. As for the others—beings or books—who weaken and depress us, and fill us with doubts and denials, let us say goodbye to them, "Their absence is good company!"

CHAPTER II.

AN ILL-OMENED WISH.

THAT evening the Harrisons did not have a very comfortable meal together. Sydney came in at last with a cheerful apology, about having found one 'bus full, and then missed another, through meeting an old friend whom he had not seen for some time.

But Minnie cut short his explanations by a frozen air of melancholy indifference. Thereupon, Sydney, still meaning to be good natured, but rather awkward in manifesting it, said that he was sorry she had been mooning by herself so long—evidently she had got down in the dumps, and he must rattle her up.

To which she tartly rejoined that he need not think she had been mooning. She had been calling at Capulet Lodge, and might have been there yet. She should be in no such hurry to return home on future occasions.

Whereupon, Sydney, now nettled, remarked that he should have been very glad of a longer chat with his old chum, but he knew what a fuss there would be if he were a little late.

"I don't suppose you ever thought of me till you had said all you wanted to say," cried Minnie, almost passionately.

"Very well, be it so," said Sydney, with affected serenity. "I never contradict your sex; it must always be right, of course."

At this taunt Minnie jumped up from the tea-table, and retired to the bedroom. She choked back her tears till she got there, and then they came—hot, painful tears. Was this the end of all the pretty speeches Sydney had made to her during their courtship? Had not he himself said she was always in the right, a clever little angel who was on the top of every ladder without knowing how she got there? And now he hurled this at her as a gibe!

Presently, there flashed on her mind many a vow registered against the occurrence of "the first quarrel." Was this a quarrel? Oh, surely not. It was only "a little tiff"—at least if nothing more were said. And fancy, if the servant noticed anything—why to-morrow "all Ploughman's Green" might be whispering that Mr. and Mrs. Harrison did not seem to get on very well together. Shame and horror! Minnie started up with glowing cheeks, dabbed her tearful eyes with a little eau-de-cologne, and snatched up a soft white wrap which she sometimes wore in the garden. Her little subterfuge was ready. She went back to the dining-room, saying, as she entered, in tones made intentionally quite audible for the little back kitchen,

"I think I'll be the better for a breath of fresh air. Shall we take a turn in the garden?"

Sydney looked at her, noted her trembling lip, and good naturedly accepted the cue.

"Well, finish up your tea, my dear," he said, "and if you can't eat anything just now, we must have something to tempt your appetite at supper-time."

So the two strolled out by the back door. As they

passed the kitchen, Minnie sidled fondly up to her husband, and he put his arm about her shoulder, and the little bride felt content that she had propitiated the petty public opinion whose criticism was always the terror of her frivolous spirit.

The garden of the Harrisons' house was not a very attractive paradise. The house itself had been built only two or three years, and its builder, after the common fashion now-a-days, had cleared away the old trees and bountiful bushes that had clustered round the humble cottage which the smart little villa had replaced. The villa's earliest tenants, a scrambling, shifty family, who had taken possession almost before the plaster was dry, and had stayed on, only under perpetual notice to quit, had, naturally, done nothing for the garden. It still remained as the builders had left it, a mere rubble of stones and sand, over-run by coarse grass and repulsive weeds. When Sydney and Minnie came into occupation, they planned to do great things with this garden. During the week of their arrival they had picked and weeded till Minnie had a bad headache, and Sydney could scarcely stand upright. But neither of them had that patient persistency which alone can transform any wilderness, physical or moral. So after spending many shillings on pot plants, which faded the day after they were bought, and on seeds which showed no sign of "coming up," they had already surrendered the whole thing as a bad job.

Very different was the aspect of the Compton's place next door. The house was, as we already know, one of the old cottages, and its little garden boasted some fruitful gooseberry bushes, two or three apple trees, a beech at one corner, and a bowery arbour at the other.

In this Mrs. Compton was now seated, giving her children the cups of milk and crusts of bread which made their wholesome supper.

By the sound of his voice, it was evident that Mr. Pyper also was in the garden, though out of sight of the Harrisons, as he was close below the dividing wall, trimming the flower bed which ran along beside it.

When Mrs. Compton saw her neighbours she greeted them, and little Tony kissed his hand. There was in Mrs. Compton's appearance no suggestion of the rude, bodily strength at which the Blythe sisters had hinted. But her manifold labours did not seem to have reacted disadvantageously upon her, for she had a sweet and wholesome comeliness, and a free, graceful carriage of figure. She wore a dress of dark print, made in plain morning-gown fashion, and that, as Minnie Harrison knew, was her unvarying daily wear, the gown used for one week's evening leisure, serving for the working hours of the next. And what better wear could be found for a woman whose work was truly never done? Yet there was no touch of "drudgery" about Mrs. Compton as she sat in her little arbour. For she was one of those happily constituted people who give their whole energy and attention to the task in hand, and waste none on that which is finished, or which is not yet begun. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and sufficient for the hour is its task. If the former truth saves us from the useless care which often imperils rather than secures our welfare, so the latter truth would spare the worries and flurries and hurries which damage work and destroy rest.

When Mr. Pyper heard his neighbours' voices, he rose from his stooping posture to salute them, adding that it had been a particularly fine day—exactly what gardeners wanted after the recent rains.

"I suppose they've done a good deal of damage?" remarked Sydney, carelessly.

"Well, yes, they've made a little work," Mr. Pyper admitted, "but they're in the ordinary course of nature. It's wonderful how things right themselves if a little more work and patience are put in, that's all."

"And I think that's enough," laughed Sydney. "How nice you do keep things, to be sure. Our place is a perfect disgrace. But it can't be helped. It soon got over me."

"You never had a proper chance with it," said the old bachelor, kindly; "keeping things right that are so, is a very different story from getting right what has been put all wrong. Then one has to begin, as it were, so very deep down, and to be satisfied with so little, for a long time. That garden of yours will be good for nothing till it has been dug right over. You may plant what you like, but what is to feed the roots? Why, there's only builder's rubbish and stones and sand. It's like forcing good habits on bad hearts. Excuse me, sir, for I know you are not used to my ways. My garden is always preaching me sermons."

"Well, I've no particular ear for sermons myself, but I own I've thought I heard mine saying something about the field of the sluggard," said Sydney, turning about and facing his melancholy crop of stinging nettles and dandelions.

"If once it was put ready for growing anything," remarked Mr. Pyper, surveying the same scene with an almost wistful interest, "I could give you any amount of slips. I have to throw away a great many because there isn't a corner of room left here to grow them. Throwing away what would grow if it got a chance goes against my grain."

"Oh we don't grudge buying plants," said Minnie, rather sharply, and very ungraciously. Then, catching from Sydney that subtle rebuke, which those closely associated with each other can often communicate without words, she hastily added, "But thank you all the same, of course."

"It's not the buying only altogether," pursued Mr. Pyper, taking no offence; "for one might buy plants that weren't used to this kind of soil or this aspect, or even this sort of air—for I reckon there's a good deal of soot in it. What!" the old gentleman interrupted himself as Tony and Tina suddenly pulled at his legs, "what, is it time for the little man and woman to be off to bed? Well, what have you got to remember for me till to-morrow morning? You are to remind me that there is a letter to be posted in the very first letter box I see when I go out after breakfast? And when you come to wake me, you are both to say to me 'the early bird'—there, repeat it—'the early bird,' and then we'll come out and see if we can find the rest of that proverb in the garden."

"That's the way you teach your moral lessons, is it?" observed Sydney with a laugh, as the children ran back to their mother. "But what about the catching of the worm? Isn't he early too? The fates are rather hard on him."

"No, sir," said the little gentleman, "he is not the early worm; he has been out all night, sir! The proverb should run 'The early bird catches the late worm.'"

"Don't your children cry when they have to go to bed?" asked Minnie of Mrs. Compton.

"Oh, no," answered the mother; "they always wake very early, and I let them get up the moment they wake, and so they are glad enough to go to rest."

"Aye, that's the right end to begin at," said the old gentleman. "That's what we are all apt to forget. The Sabbath rest is never safe till a hard-working week is set

before it. 'Six days shalt thou labour,' and then on the seventh thou wilt be ready enough to pause."

"Your grandchildren, sir, I presume," said Sydney, as Mrs. Compton led the little ones away. He knew nothing, of course, of the information his wife had got from the Misses Blythe.

"Oh, no," answered the old gentleman, with the air of one too modest to have such honours thrust upon him. "No, I was never married. Nor is there a drop of kindred blood of mine that I know of anywhere in the world now. I've had reason to remember a word my mother said to me in days when I was one of a big family. I was a foolish little boy, and I said I did not like some old lady because she wore spectacles. 'I shall have to wear spectacles when I am old,' said my mother 'so then, I suppose, you won't like me.' 'That's different," said I, 'because you belong to me.' 'Everybody belongs to everybody,' said my mother, 'or else God is not our Father, and then the world isn't worth living in!' She had a way of saying things that made them stick—had my mother," pursued the old man, tenderly. "And often and often since have I blessed her for that word."

Mrs. Compton presently returned from her maternal duties, and after a little more neighbourly chat over the wall, the Harrisons went back into their house, carrying with them an armful of flowers which Mr. Pyper pressed upon them. They were both rather inclined to make fun of the old gentleman, with his queer look and quaint modes of speech. Nevertheless, Sydney did remark that the old boy seemed one of the right sort; he could understand a fellow making a friend of him, and a strange gravity fell on Sydney's face as he said that. Certainly, Mr. Pyper had put the young couple into the best of humours. Minnie was delighted to bring some of her ornamental pots and jars into use. Sydney said he had never seen anybody arrange flowers so prettily as she did, and then Minnie looked up at him just as she used to do in their courting days.

But the pretty little tableau was broken up by a postman's knock.

Minnie would have flown to the door herself. But Sydney forestalled her.

"It is not for you, it is for me," he said, from the hall, as he took in the letter, "only a business thing."

"I hate business things," Minnie playfully pouted over her flowers. "They ought to go to the office. They have no right to be sent here, making me think something nice has come for me."

She was so busy adjusting some trailing tendrils that she never noticed Sydney did not straightway return to the parlour. And when he did come back, he went to the sofa and lay down, but presently got up and said he thought he'd take a few turns outside with his cigar, and then go straight to bed.

"I've had a tiring day, my dear," he observed.

"Yes, poor darling," said Minnie, "I wish we could enjoy ourselves all day doing nothing."

Sydney gave a strange sounding laugh, and remarked, "I knew a wiseacre who used to say, 'Take care what you wish for, for you are certain to get plenty of it.'"

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THE STORY OF A WORKING GIRLS' CLUB.

In Edinburgh, as in other large cities, there are a number of girls of a lower grade socially than those reached by the Young Women's Christian Association, or the Scottish Girls' Friendly Society. They work during the daytime at rag-picking, fish-hawking, tobacco-spinning, and in nurseries; their evenings are their own, but they live in miserable overcrowded lodgings, or in dirty, unhomelike houses, where there is nothing to induce them to remain within doors, and they have no place of resort, save the street, the dancing-saloon, and the penny-gaff, for the much-needed recreation. For a few years prior to 1883, half-a-dozen young ladies carried on, among some of those girls, a Bible Class on Sabbath afternoons, and a Sewing Class on Wednesday evenings, in a dingy, ill-ventilated Mission Hall, entering from a common stair in the Canongate. The work was difficult. There were occasions when every girl in the room — even the young ones of twelve and thirteen — was intoxicated, and then control was nigh impossible. Sometimes it seemed as though a policeman would have to be sent for to clear the room; but the workers held on, and success was granted. An instance will serve to show the character of the girls. At the close of the sewing class one evening a lady stood at the door bidding good-bye to the girls as they passed out, while the others were busy putting away the work. Suddenly a girl, who had left the room shortly before, came rushing back in breathless haste, and said: "Oh! Miss F——, there's a lassie 'stealt' your Bible, an'

"All were bona fide working girls."

she's doon Little Jack's Close." Hurriedly glancing round, and finding that her much-loved book was indeed gone from the chair on which she had laid it, with a look of intense pain on her face, Miss F—— made for the door, saying, "Who has it, and where is she?" "Ye canna get her noo, she'll be away by this time; but gee's a shillin', and I'll get it for ye," was the reply. A shilling was hastily handed over with the words, "Get it as quickly as you can, like a dear, will you?" The girl took the shilling, and coolly pocketed it, and then as calmly produced the Bible from some receptacle concealed beneath her apron. Having tossed it down, before anything more could be said, she and her companions ran from the room, shrieking and yelling with laughter at what they considered such cleverness. Yet they had warm hearts when one got beneath the surface, and a feeling of loyalty sprang up towards those whom they considered *their own* ladies. The same worker had been dangerously ill, and girls, who had no intention of staying in the class, came night after night to ask for her. A girl came one evening, saying, "I canna stay the night. I'm gaun to a 'mairriage,' but hoo's Miss F——?" "She is greatly better," said the worker addressed; "but what a pity you can't stay; she will likely be here for a little to-night." The girl went away without further remark; but, in the course of half-an-hour she returned, and as she took her seat announced, "I've gi'en up the 'mairriage,' for I wanted to see Miss F——"

As the workers visited at the homes of their girls, and became acquainted with their daily surroundings, they became more and more convinced of the little avail their influence weekly could be against the daily, hourly incentives to evil. The girls needed amusement, they needed healthful pure recreation as well as religious instruction and help; but how were they to get either the one or the other? Many and anxious were the thoughts and talks these young ladies had as to what could be done for their girls. About the close of 1882, a little book, entitled "Grave Moral Questions," by Miss Ellice Hopkins, fell into the hands of a young lady, a friend of the Bible and Sewing Class workers, and she at once passed it on to them. In this book Miss Hopkins speaks of the efforts of some educated girls in Nottingham to reach their less highly-favoured sisters by the opening of an Evening Home, or Working Girls' Club. This seemed the very suggestion that these Edinburgh workers had been groping after. They took it up and set about the preliminary work with zeal. I have stated that they numbered only half-a-dozen; they were all young, some of them only girls in their teens, and none of them were wealthy. But prayer and work, faith and ardour can conquer difficulties.

These ladies first purchased several copies of Miss Hopkins' book, which they distributed among their friends, and talking with them, interested them in their projects and their girls. Then they gave what they could themselves, and afterwards got donations to start the work. Meanwhile an outlook was kept for suitable premises. Soon it was discovered that a large room, part of a joiner's workshop, in Chalmer's Close, not far from John Knox's Church, was to let. But rents and taxes are exceptionally high in the centre of Edinburgh. How they longed to take that place, and yet——. There was nothing like the needed money on hand. One evening, as they came from the Sewing Class, one of them told an elderly lady who had been present, of this room and their longings in reference to it. The lady at once offered to guarantee the first year's rent, and, at last, the way was clear. She never needed to fulfil that guarantee, but she gave, by her kind offer, what was needed to launch the effort. The coveted room was taken, and willing hands were soon busy scrubbing and cleaning, adorning and furnishing it. Bills of invitation were then printed and circulated among the girls employed in the public works. A constitution was adopted, and office-bearers appointed. Who can describe the joy, enthusiasm, and gratitude of the workers, when, in the beginning of June, 1883, they opened the first Working Girls' Club in Scotland? None of them will ever forget it. Ninety-five girls responded to their invitation that night, and it was decided to have the place open twice weekly during the summer months. Subsequently it was open every night in the week from 7.30 to 10 p.m., and a Bible Class arranged for Sabbaths.

The Club is a long, low-roofed, narrow hall, overshadowed by tall tenements, necessitating the constant use of gas. The walls are adorned with numerous prints—several illustrative of Scripture scenes—with here and there a mirror, which brightens the place wonderfully. At the further end are several rows of black painted drawers, where the girls can keep their work. These are covered with red, and shaded with red curtains, behind which is a narrow strip that serves as a workers' room. Lower down are two tables and a sofa, also covered with red, and some light wooden chairs. An American stove and a piano face each other, and near the door is a large vacant space for skipping-ropes and romping games; while suspended from the roof are two splendid swings, with wooden seats, double ropes, and iron rings, by which they may be put up or taken down at pleasure.

Strange as it may seem, comparatively few of the sewing class girls took advantage of this room. The place was filled by those of a somewhat better class, though just as rough and difficult to manage. Girls employed in printing offices and meter works; book folders, envelope makers, upholstresses, tailoresses, lithograph-machinists, day servants, and all sorts of *indoor* workers were in the majority. But all were *bonâ fide* working girls. No school girls, nor any under thirteen years of age were admitted. Such an unruly, touchy set the most of them were in those early days, as they quarrelled over their games, swore at each other over the swings, or strove to do whatever was forbidden, and to set the workers at defiance. Sometimes one of them would keep up a running commentary, audible over the whole room, on the prayer which brought the evening's gathering to an end; and if one were offended half-a-dozen walked out in company with her. They apparently thought that the Club could not succeed without their patronage, and so they would teach the workers a lesson. All that is changed now; it is years since there has been any serious disturbance. A nicer, better-behaved set of girls it would be difficult to find anywhere, and many of them are avowed Christians. The Club has now been open every night in the week, from September till July, for eight years. Most of the original workers are at their posts, though one or two are married, and two have entered the golden gates. Their places have been taken by earnest, willing workers, and the efforts on behalf of those for whom they labour have strengthened and developed as the years pass on.

H. B. THOMSON.

THE harder our work the more we need solitude and prayer, without which work becomes mechanical and insincere.—*Maclaren.*

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL.

EXCESSIVE self-consciousness, it is generally agreed, partakes of the nature of moral disease. The person who cannot enter a room in which strangers are assembled without feeling himself the object of everyone's scrutiny may well be pitied as sincerely as a sufferer from real physical disability; and that nervous bashfulness is a serious drawback to the successful performance of duties otherwise well within one's power, incapacitating many a good worker and depriving the world at large of much valuable service, cannot be denied.

Blushing, incoherent speech, and a horrible fear of presenting an awkward figure to spectators, may doubtless be sometimes caused by sheer bodily or nervous weakness, and occasionally by too poor an estimate of one's own abilities; but we also believe that self-consciousness is often a subtle form of selfishness, and the natural result of an overweening desire for approbation. One of the most wretchedly self-conscious persons we ever knew, who could not enter a public assembly or meet a friend in the street without trembling from head to foot, and who was almost unable to write her own name with any one looking on, was a person remarkable for her strenuous endeavour to always speak and act "becomingly," and produce an impression of immaculate propriety. Her painful nervousness was the penalty paid.

It is a singular psychical law that an excessive craving for the admiration of those about us should so often bring about a precisely opposite effect, and that a burning aspiration after distinction in any public act or performance should result in miserable incapacity, if not downright clumsiness or ignominious failure. While on the other hand may we not take it as a humble illustration of the great law that "he that loseth his life shall find it" when we note the charm and grace of manner, the freedom and calm capability of those in whom self is wholly forgotten in the interest of the work in hand, or in a desire for the pleasure of others?

The cure for self-consciousness and its train of attendant discomforts is, plainly, self-oblivion. But the habit of a life-time is hard to eradicate. Better would it be to check the earliest tendency to this weakness exhibited by childhood, and to avoid all training by which so dangerous a failing may be fostered. To afford a few modest hints on this point is the object of the present paper.

It is remarkable how persistently, and in how great a variety of ways parents, and sometimes teachers, endeavour to instil into the young this miserable contemplation of self. To "forget yourself" has actually come to be the equivalent of ill-behaviour, instead of being, as it should, the normal attitude of the mind!

This training begins when the little one is scarcely out of arms. Of course, every baby is a perfect beauty in the estimation of mamma and aunties, and they can scarcely be expected to keep their opinion entirely to themselves. But is it wise to be continually praising Daisy's "lovely eyes," or Bertie's "pretty curls" in the hearing of the little folks themselves? Or to set them to "say so-and-so," or "do such-and-such" as an exhibition to every admiring friend? Still worse is the practice, which we have known to be kept up until a girl was ten or eleven years old, of quoting in her presence all the queer or clever things she said, even echoing, for the purpose of calling others' attention, her every exclamation or remark, and audibly commenting on her every gesture and change of expression. "Oh, that little scream of delight!" or, "Dear, dear, *what* a long face!" or, "There's a deep sigh!" or, "You need not colour up, my love, there's nothing to blush about"; until the unfortunate child becomes perpetually aware of herself, and of the probable effect upon the spectators of every insignificant thing she says or does. Derision, or unfavourable criticism if made in public is quite as bad, the one producing conceit, the other a painful self-depreciation.

How should *we* like to be served as many children are? How should we like to be hauled out from behind a curtain, or captured when peeping in at the door, to have our points exhibited to every chance visitor, whether it be the colour of our hair or the peculiarity of our thumb nails; to be told to shut our eyes that the length of our eyelashes might be criticised, or commanded to trot across the room that the queer twist of our left leg might be displayed; to be requested to smile that our dimple might be admired, or to "say" this or that because we *do* say it so funnily?

No wonder that some little ones under such treatment become hopelessly shy, others sadly conceited, while all have the lovely bloom of unconsciousness, chief grace of childhood, rubbed off years before it need be.

In the case of the little girl above mentioned, an extraordinary artificiality of behaviour was the result. She was perfectly self-possessed, but though no one could find fault with her deportment, every word and movement had a cut-and-dried air that made its actual propriety unpleasing.

Some delicate children are made self-conscious by perpetual comments made in their hearing on their symptoms and general appearance. We have known a child never to cough ever so slightly without glancing round to note the effect upon a sympathising audience. This is the commencement of that absorption in self which makes some invalids so unnecessarily disagreeable to those about them.

But the worst form of self-consciousness is doubtless the consciousness of one's own superior virtue. This is the essence of priggishness. Those who are too prone—and which of us is not?—to bask complacently in the approval of conscience and the comfortable belief that we are adorning our profession, would do well to remember that consciousness of meritorious conduct is a danger signal marking the edge of that precipice called spiritual pride. The glow of satisfaction in having done good, which contemplates the happiness or benefit of someone else and forgets one's personal instrumentality in the matter, is quite another thing. We may also reflect, if inclined to admire our own good example, that the moment we become agreeably aware of our own distinguished rectitude of behaviour, it is likely to become offensive to others.

Certain smart juveniles are peculiarly liable to the fault of priggishness. They should rarely be praised, for they cannot bear it, and never at the expense of another. The exhortation to "See how good Tommy is, and how well *he* behaves," will only result in making Tommy as much detested by others as he is beloved by himself. But children are such transparent little beings that self-satisfaction should be easily detected, and quietly snubbed on its earliest manifestation. Let us teach them instead to forget themselves in some object outside themselves, to lose all thought of self in whole-hearted absorption in others, to behave well, not because of a continual recollection of their manners and what people will think of them, but because their minds are humble, and their hearts full of love.

MY COUSIN LILIAS.

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD.

MY cousin Lilias! I see her still, and yet it is nigh upon two score years since I gazed on her sweet face. I was young then, and am old now; but she, she has never aged! As I last saw her in the spring of life, her eighteen summers resting lightly on her golden head, so her image has remained graven in my heart and memory. Oh, Lilias, my first and only love, will you know me, worn and travel-stained with the long battle of life, when I shall pass the border-land, which you have crossed so long ago?

Sitting alone this winter evening beside the fireside, the past comes back to me so strangely vivid.

I am a youth again starting for my first ramble in foreign lands. It was a lovely summer's day when Frank Stirling and I, with our knapsacks on our backs, and good stout sticks in our hands, crossed from Newhaven to Dieppe, on a walking tour through Normandy.

How free we felt, how light hearted. Never had the world seemed so bright and fair; an old world, truly, but a new one to us, and gaily we tramped along the white roads from town to town, village to village. Everything charmed us as we wandered up hill and down dale, through golden fields of waving corn, made brilliant with red poppies and blue starlike cornflowers. At midday we would rest and take shelter from the blazing sun in some quaint village inn. We were astonished at the good fare and civility we met with everywhere, and charmed beyond measure with the strange dresses of the peasants; the men's blue or white blouses, and the women with their snowy caps and long golden earrings, their short, bright-coloured petticoats, and kerchiefs folded across their bosoms. All was so different, so new, so fresh. We had wandered thus for upwards of a week, when suddenly I remembered my mother's parting injunction to be sure and go to the village of St. Pierre, near Rouen, where my Aunt Milicent lived with her daughter Lilias.

The idea had annoyed me at first. "I am off on a holiday, a tramp; I am not going visiting, mother," I had answered her.

"Oh, well, please yourself," she said; "still, I should be glad to have news of Milicent and her child, she is my only sister."

"Frank, shall we go to Rouen? I have an aunt there and a cousin; my mother wished me to hunt them up."

"Most certainly," answered my companion. "A cousin, is she young and is she pretty?"

"Well, young she certainly is, barely eighteen; as for her being pretty, I know about as much of that as you do. I have never seen my cousin Lilias."

"Lilias; a charming name, and eighteen! We will certainly go to St. Pierre, Guy;" and so we turned out of the beaten track, and made for the village of St. Pierre. It lay nestled among the hills in the Seine valley. We asked our way to The Hermitage, and were directed down a long avenue of beech trees.

"The last house on the left-hand side is Madame Grey's house," we were told. It had been a very hot day, and the roads had been dusty, so we were both dirty and tired, and felt somewhat ashamed of presenting ourselves in this plight before comparative strangers. Still, I had written to Aunt Milicent, telling her of my mother's wish that I should make her acquaintance, and that I hoped to be with her this evening, and so I thought it better to waive all ceremony and go straight to The Hermitage.

"The last house" in the avenue. I seem to see it now as if it were but yesterday that I stood before the tall iron gateway, overgrown with purple and white clematis, now in full flower. Tired and travel-stained, Frank and I looked through the iron bars, and forgot our weariness as we gazed entranced on the vision before us. Great trees cast their shadows upon the gravel path leading up to the house, on either side of which was a shrubbery such as I had never seen before—just one mass of tall, white lilies; nothing grew between or amongst them, the green stems rose straight and high, each with its coronet of spotless blossoms, and in their midst stood a maiden holding a stem of lilies in one hand and bending her head lovingly over the stately plants, which seemed to hedge her round. Her soft, white dress fell about her in graceful folds, and her golden hair glinted in the light of the setting sun, a Lily amongst lilies as fair and fragile.

Suddenly lifting her head she caught sight of us, and a faint rosy tint suffused the delicate face; she started slightly, hesitated, and then coming rapidly towards us, opened the gate, and smiling, looking from one to the other, asked in a soft, silvery voice, "Which is my cousin Guy?"

Ah, Lilias, when your blue eyes rested on me, as stammeringly I claimed relationship, my heart went out towards you, and I loved you not for a day or an hour, but for ever and ever, for time and for eternity. As Eve came to Adam through the flowery paths of the garden of Eden, so you came to me, my darling!

Our first greeting over, bewildered I followed her across the garden, up to the low, ivy-covered house, where Aunt Milicent stood waiting to welcome me. She was just sufficiently like my mother to make me feel at once at home, and her pleasure at seeing me was so unfeigned, her greeting so tender, that I was deeply touched. What need to tell that from henceforth our journeyings were over? Aunt Milicent was so hospitable, and we persuaded ourselves that there was so much to see in the neighbourhood—what was the use of wandering further on? Frank was delighted with his comfortable quarters, and as for me—well, I had found my haven. And so the hours and the days sped by, and we scarcely noted the flight of time until I awoke one morning to the consciousness that it was my last day, that on the morrow Lilias and I must part. My heart sank within me, and it seemed to me when we met that morning that Lilias had been weeping. Slowly, side by side, we passed along the shrubbery walk. The lilies in her garden had faded, their beauty was of the past. Out through the garden gate we went, across the fields, down to the river path, and there beside those shining waters in full sunshine, with the cloudless sky overhead, and the song of the birds filling the air, we plighted our troth.

Few words were needed between us, our souls had long since spoken to each other in the mystic language of love. Then silence fell upon us, the silence of great happiness, and, hand in hand, we wandered on like two children, making no plans for the future—the present was so fraught with joy, our cup of bliss was so full.

When we returned to the Hermitage we had no need to tell Aunt Milicent and Frank our story.

"Do you think your faces have not told us the interesting

"In their midst stood a maiden." p. 104.

tale long ago?" they inquired, laughing.

"Tell your mother we will come to England in the autumn," said Aunt Milicent, as she kissed me, with tears in her eyes; "then she shall see my Lilias."

"Our Lilias," I answered, thinking proudly, "Soon to be mine, and mine alone!" Ah, if I could have foreseen that I should never hear my darling's voice again, never see the smile creep from her lips to her eyes, and so shine down on me like stars. We parted almost gaily. In a few short weeks we were to meet again. We had no idle fears, no presentiment of coming evil.

"You are the most reasonable of lovers," said Frank, as the train steamed out of the station, and we caught our last glimpse of Lilias smiling and waving her farewell.

"Why should we be otherwise?" I answered; "we are so happy."

* * * * *

The trees were scarcely touched with the russet hues of

autumn when I received a telegram, "Come quickly; Lilias is dying."

The message conveyed no meaning to my mind. What had death to do with my Lilias? Only I knew that I must go to her. As I crossed once more the threshold of her home, no Lilias came forth to welcome me, and I knew that the angel with the "amaranthine wreath" had entered there, and crowned my darling with immortal flowers. So swift had been the message that no trace of wasting or of suffering marred the beauty of that pure face. She lay smiling on her couch, robed in white, with spotless flowers clustering round her head and clasped in the small white hands, folded across her bosom. She had run her course so swiftly and so well, and stood amidst God's angels—

"In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
She lives whom we call dead."

MARRIAGE.

BY ELIZABETH NORTON.

HOW much has been written lately respecting Marriage! The question has been discussed in this paper and that, ventilated in almost every way, and criticised in all its bearings on every class of society—its use and abuse; the wisdom and unwisdom of the act; the rights of men, the wrongs of women, and *vice versâ;* cases quoted; some made a precedent of, and others soon relegated to the back chambers of memory; indeed, the whole topic has become unpleasantly stale viewed as a society question, and one is apt to become unconscious of the great import and solemnity of the subject itself.

Its solemnity must impress us when we remember who first said, "It is not good that man should be alone'; and whose first miracle gave sanctity and approval to the wedding feast, which He honoured and blessed with His presence.

Having such an origin, is it not sad that such a question should be asked, "Is marriage a failure?" or rather, is it not sad that the need for such a question should arise?

Alas, failures there have been, and those of the most miserable kind! Unsuitability of mind and purpose, the yielding to the first impulses of will and an undisciplined heart, unworthy and unscrupulous motives, have plunged many into domestic misery, so that hundreds of poor, misguided women and silly men have wished the deed undone; and though the former affect to sneer at *single women*, there are those to-day who envy *their* freedom from ties which gall and corrode daily—chains rivetted by themselves when such marriages are made.

Still, I hope and believe cases like these are greatly in the minority, and that there are thousands upon thousands of happy homes in this England of ours and elsewhere where God is honoured and loved, where order, contentment, and virtue reign.

One very great factor in domestic happiness I believe to be *self-denial.* We too often want "our own way," forgetting that "To *give* is to *live*" (as an old proverb has it); in other words, our happiness, our life itself (for what is life without happiness?), depends on kindly, helpful thought for *others*, giving them the preference, foregoing ease and our own desires for their comfort and advancement.

In married life there is always plenty of room to exercise this virtue, especially in its early days, when the glamour is wearing off, and husband sees wife in ordinary every-day attire, and, shall I add, on her ordinary every-day behaviour.

In her novel, "Adam Bede," George Eliot says she believes Solomon had in his mind's eye, when he alludes in Proverbs to the contentious woman (chap. xxvii. 15), not the interminable scold, who is perpetually nagging, but the fidgety, restless soul, who never gives one a minute's peace, and must always be fidgeting and worrying about real and imaginary ills, making her husband's life a burden.

I have known women who thought far more of nicely polished chairs and immaculate carpets than of their husband's comfort and ease, and who would scold before the house door was closed behind the entering master (?). Such a man has a house, certainly; but no *home.* Ah, to be happy, we *must* give and take, bear and forbear.

I believe the married state to be the happiest. What in this world is there to equal a happy home? Wealth cannot purchase it, though money is such a wonderful help, but it alone cannot avert sickness, death, or disgrace.

The love, confidence, and respect of husband, wife, and children, each to each, are the most beautiful and enduring of earthly blessings; and, surrounded by such, should sickness, poverty, or even death intrude, it does not take *all.* I commend to you the exquisite picture given of a humble, happy home, where godliness with contentment dwells, in Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night"; the much-abused Martin Tupper on Marriage in his "Proverbial Philosophy" is also well worth reading and remembering. He believes that "a well-assorted marriage hath not many cares." I cannot quite agree with him there. Cares spring up and cumber the ground like weeds, but we may surmount the cares by asking the aid of a Higher Power. His help never faileth.

But I think Tupper's advice to the young man is excellent. He says:—

"Seek a good wife of thy God, for she is the best gift of His providence.
Let her be a child of God, that she bring with her a blessing to thy house.
When thou choosest a wife, think not only of thyself,
But of those that God may give thee of her, that they reproach thee not for their being.
Marry not without means, for so shouldst thou tempt Providence;
But wait not for more than enough, for marriage is the duty of most men."

Addressing the wife, he says:—

"Be kind to the friends of thy husband, for the love they have to him;
And gently bear with his infirmities. Hast thou no need of his forbearances?
If ye feel love to decline, track out quickly the secret cause;
Speedily seek to be reconciled, for love is the life of marriage.
Now this is the sum of the matter: If ye will be happy in marriage,
Confide, love, and be patient; be faithful, firm and holy."

Few, unfortunately, can fulfil all the poet's injunctions; but his precepts are worth remembering, and it is well to aim at a high ideal.

Of the necessity for making a "wise choice"; of the command to those who are Christians to marry "only in the Lord;" of those duties of husband to wife and wife to husband which Paul so plainly, emphatically, and imperatively commands, I will not now write. Love and trust, trust and love, should be the foundation of happy homes. And where, unfortunately, as sometimes happens after marriage, incompatibility of temper, and failings of many kinds which were not dreamt of before, manifest themselves, let each try to lead the other with a silken cord. It often answers, and is well worth trying.

Oh, the misery of a loveless, unhappy marriage! Who cares to speak of or more than hint at those blots which sully too many homes? We all know what they are, the long catalogue of horrors. Let those who care for such study the newspaper reports of the police and divorce courts.

God forbid that we should learn aught of such things, but to avoid them; and may He help us to cultivate in our homes such gentleness, love, and trust, coupled with all endeavours for domestic comfort, well-being, and peace as shall permit us to safely rest content! And when the romance of early love has gone, thank God the real thing remains; and the love tried by sickness, poverty or losses, and perhaps by death of some dearly-loved and cherished child, becomes ennobled, refined, and purified, perfect through suffering, the little clouds which arose sometimes only making sunshine all the sweeter, and in its endurance, unselfishness, and purity, becomes more like what God would have it. And what must have been in the Divine Heart when He allowed the Apostle John to liken the mystical union of Christ and His Church to that of the bride and bridegroom?

I will close by quoting the words of a Golden Wedding Song, called "Faith and Hope":—

"Oh, don't be sorrowful, darling! now, don't be sorrowful, pray!
For taking the year together, my dear, there isn't more night than day.

'Tis rainy weather, my loved one; Time's waves, they heavily run;
But taking the year together, my dear, there isn't more cloud than sun.

We're old folks now, companion, our heads they're growing gray,
But taking the year together, my dear, you always will find the May.

We've had our May, my darling, and our roses long ago,
And the time of the year is come, my dear, for the long dark nights and the snow.

But God is God, my faithful, of night as well as of day,
And we feel and know that we can go wherever He leads the way.

Aye! God of night, my darling, of the night of death, so grim!
But the gate that from life leads out, good wife, is the Gate that *leads to Him.*"

NURSES AT WORK.

BY F. M. HOLMES.

GIVING ill and lonely, how much a patient values the ministrations of a skilled nurse; how much, indeed, does such ministration conduce to a satisfactory recovery. Yet the poor, who often suffer so much, cannot pay for this attention.

The largest London association for nursing the sick poor gratuitously in their own homes is connected with the Bible Women's Mission, founded by the late Mrs. Ranyard in 1857. In addition to 130 Biblewomen, it has 78 nurses constantly employed in as many districts, some, indeed, outside the metropolitan boundary, and over 140 medical men have given written testimony as to their efficiency and to the value of their services. The nurses, all of whom work under superintendents, pursue their beneficent labour so quietly and so unostentatiously that very many persons may not be aware even of their existence. But there they are, daily carrying medical comforts, much needed nourishment, and kindly attendance into many a poor home. During the year ending Michaelmas last they attended no fewer than 7,243 cases, paying 97,156 visits.

They are directed in their ministrations from the headquarters of the organization at No. 2, Adelphi Terrace, Mrs. Selfe Leonard, a niece of Mrs. Ranyard, being the Hon. Secretary and General Superintendent. There is also a Council, of which the Earl of Harrowby is President, Lord Kinnaird, Treasurer, which numbers among its members the Bishop of Winchester, and several ladies of title. The nurses are all hospital trained. They spend a year in the surgical and medical wards of a general hospital, subsequently entering a maternity hospital, and when placed in a district are accompanied at first by a superintendent-nurse of large experience.

They receive their cases from clergymen, doctors, and others, and, when established in a district, from the poor themselves. Each nurse has a book, in which she enters the patient's name, address, illness, etc., also the doctor's name, the beginning of the case and its end. There is, further, a division for registering the gifts she bestows, most of which are supplied from headquarters, such as lint, lotion, bandages, clothing, or nourishment; and she is allowed a small sum weekly wherewith to purchase beef-tea, eggs, meat, or milk for such patients as require them. For too often it is found that the sufferings of the patients are aggravated by want of nourishing food and sufficient clothing.

The nurse has also a chart, which she pins over the patient's bed. On this she marks the pulse and temperature of the sufferer—for she is skilled in the use of the clinical thermometer—and space is also given on which the medical man (who may be parish, hospital, or club doctor) may write his directions. The nurse can also state what she has done since the doctor's last visit, and ask him necessary questions. By this means communication can be kept up between them, for it is not possible that in their rounds they can always meet beside the patient's bed.

Sometimes a nurse is very busy; here is one reported with six full cases. One patient is so ill that the nurse attends her twice a day, and has seen a doctor about her. Passing from this one, the nurse finds that the next has become quite blind. She hurries her off to Charing Cross Hospital; the doctor gives some medicine, and says

the patient must keep her bed at once, and be well nourished. Back again goes the nurse, engages a girl to come into the little home to help, for which she pays her, and persuades a neighbour also to assist. It is to be hoped that the doctor's advice will be of use, and that the eyesight may be regained. The vision, too, of three children is bad; the nurse bathes their eyes night and morning and washes them all. Another case is that of an old lady of seventy-nine, who is suffering from a sprained hip, which the nurse rubs with oil; and yet another is that of a woman with varicose veins. So from one patient to another the nurse passes, carrying comfort and relief and kindly ministration.

Quite unsectarian in its character and aims, great importance is nevertheless given in this organization to the religious character of the nurses, as also to their aptitude for their nursing duties. The cost of their support is about £60 each annually, including uniform—which is very neat and suitable, consisting of cloak, white apron, and plain dress—and a certain quantity of medical stores, one room at 2, Adelphi Terrace being devoted to the reception of these. Nurses are also supplied with necessary appliances, such as bed-rests, etc. The variety of the cases they tend is almost as great as the sad list of human suffering itself. Cancer, consumption, dropsy, wounds, bronchitis, paralysis, surgical cases, all form part, and maternity cases are very numerous. The ignorance which sometimes transpires appears amazing. Thus, a woman whose child was suffering from typhoid was told to give lime-water with the milk, whereupon she gave lime-juice instead, greatly to the little patient's detriment, no doubt. But the nurses endeavour to teach self-help, and to show the poor how to tend the sick and also instruct them in the use of sanitation to prevent illness. Perhaps one of the most valuable parts of their labours is their instruction as to the use of disinfectants and their importance in preventing the spread of infectious disease.

A remarkable testimony as to the solid and practical worth of the work may be seen in the generous but strictly anonymous gifts of a gentleman, who desired only to be known by the letters, "G. M. E." For years he had been wont to give an average of £3,000 annually to the Mission as a whole. Altogether his donations amounted to over £60,000. But he required of the managers of the Mission that they should not seek to know him, and when he died last year his widow, bringing a legacy of £1,000 mentioned in his will, desired the same anonymity to be preserved. The story of this absolutely unknown but munificent giver is, perhaps, unique in the whole history of British philanthropy.

The cost of the nurses and Bible-women is met by local support—that is, by money raised in the district where each works, and also by grants from the Central Fund of the Mission. The first nurse went into training at the London Hospital in 1868. There are now eight probationers, in addition to the seventy-eight nurses, and also five "pioneers," whom we take to be experienced superintendents, who furnish weekly reports to Mrs. Leonard. The greatest number are in the S.E. district, which perhaps needs them most, and where no fewer than twenty-eight are located. In connection with the Mission also is a Convalescent Home at Southend. All the arrangements appear very complete, and the whole seems to form a very compact and efficient organization for the selection and training of district nurses and for the carrying on of their work.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHILDHOOD.

WE, who have reached mature years are apt to think that suffering and unhappiness are the products of maturity, and, looking back on our childhood through a rosy haze, imagine it to have been a period of unsullied joys. Yet if we could but gauge the experiences of many men and women we should discover that, in early years, they suffered as they have never suffered since. One such, a well-known modern writer, says, "There are some of us who in after years say to fate, 'now deal us your hardest blows, give us what you will, but let us never suffer again as we did when we were children.'" No general proposition can be laid down as to the capacity of children to suffer. Temperament has a wonderful power in the arrangement of our pains and pleasure; the choleric or phlegmatic child will pass unmoved through much that will make the nervous, timid child wretched or utterly hopeless. There are sensitive, self-conscious children who are wounded many a time a day, and spend many unhappy moments of retrospect. "Why did I do so and so?" or "Why did I forget such a thing?" these are the troubles which upset such a delicate freight of happiness. Questions of behaviour, little social misdemeanours, are usually more troublesome to self-conscious children than questions of conscience. Their sufferings are almost always through causes grown people would call trivial, rather than from actual afflictions or bereavements. In these severer trials they have the balm of bountiful attention and sympathy.

Play.

The barb of childhood's suffering is its hopelessness, and its intense ignorance. It has no knowledge of outlived trouble, with which to compare the present, it has no experience of the healing powers of time. All is new and strange; "hope has not yet got wings to fly beyond the days and weeks." Then, too often, it has to bear alone what might be so greatly lessened by being shared with another. Many a little heart bubbles over with some pitiful tale to which no one seems to have leisure to listen, or swells with a love no one cares to receive. Children, like their elders, find a wonderful relief in sharing their feelings, and half their trouble is gone when they can pour into some sympathetic ear the story of disappointment, vexation, failure, or fear. Grown people, who indulge in the habit of ridiculing or bantering children, cannot understand how cruel is the custom. Dread of these forms of torment has caused many a sensitive child to bear uncomplainingly much which might, with an explanatory word, have been cured for ever.

These nervous, sensitive children are abnormal, say some mothers, and congratulate themselves on their own healthy, boisterous little family, full of health and playfulness, apparently impervious to the pangs of wounded vanity or self-consciousness. Yet all childhood's troubles do not come from their mental life, and there is a danger of clouding the young days of the most robust children by thoughtlessness and an inability to enter into the feelings of youth.

It is a wise and a necessary thing that children should be taught to help their parents or guardians, to save them many steps, to aid them in a score of ways, and there are few children who are not delighted to do so, but we must guard against a lack of thought and consideration which keeps the little feet and hands perpetually busy, and which allows us to break, without compunction, into the most thrilling chapter of a tale, or the nearly completed erection of a card castle.

To be healthy and happy every child must have periods of work and play, and to be enjoyed these must be fairly uninterrupted and unfettered. To give a child toys, books, or clothes "too nice" for everyday use, to burden it with injunctions not to spoil this or break that, is to deprive play of half its pleasure. In dealing with children let it be our endeavour to remember our own young days as they actually were, how we felt, how we suffered and enjoyed. Let us think, too, how quickly they passed, and how very soon they had to give place to struggles and anxieties. The recollection will make us very tender with the little ones committed to our care, and we shall determine that, even at the cost of some personal discomfort, we will gild as brightly as we can, "the fleeting days of childhood."

ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

"GOD'S WORK"; OR, MARJORIE'S MISTRESS.

BY LINA ORMAN-COOPER.

"CURSED be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jer. xlviii. 10. R.V.). Marjorie's mistress read the above verse in her morning's portion one bright spring day. It has a brisk, war-like ring about it that exactly suits all busy workers. So Bertha Carroll pondered over it for some time. Was she doing *any* work for God? And, if so, was she doing it negligently?

Mother was a little bit late for prayers in consequence, and Paddy was inclined to be fidgety when she appeared at last in the middle of the chapter. Somehow, even a couple of minutes lost in the early morning are very hard to make up. Mr. Carroll had to leave his bacon and eggs unfinished as his 'bus came round the corner at the precise second.

Paddy went off to school with a hunch of bread in his hands, while the two little girls started without mufflers in the keen east wind. Marjorie's race after them put back *her* work a bit. In fact everything seemed to go wrong.

But, as Bertha made paste for patties, and dusted the drawing-room ornaments, the verse with its war-like echo kept buzzing in her head—"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." It was really a very terrible thought, because, somehow, she believed she was really doing *nothing* for Him.

There was a coal club established a few streets off, and Mrs. Carroll had often been asked to help in it. Every other week the pink card had been passed by with a "Oh! I have no time." To-day, in spite of a pile of undarned stockings in her work-drawers, Bertha felt she must go. Perhaps this was a work of the Lord she had neglected?

But, somehow, that hour spent in the club did not seem altogether right. A vision of Marjorie doing double duty would edge in beside the cards and the pennies and the other women.

Bertha caught herself up sharply. *Very* negligently she was doing her coal business!

Marjorie opened the door on her mistress's return with rather an injured air. The children had come home to dinner. How was she to brush them up and serve the meal at the same time?

For a few more days this conflict of duties went on. Bertha began to wear a troubled, harassed expression. The parochial calls were so many. The lending library, the mothers' meeting, the missionary tea-party, all had equal claims on her time. And above all these occupations there hung the verse, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently."

Away in the little house round the corner, a certain sweet old Quaker lady still lived and loved and suffered. Very, very seldom now did Miss Benson's slim figure ever cross the threshold, and the white steps were whiter than ever since a pair of active feet were more often on a sofa than running on errands of mercy.

Up those white steps Mrs. Carroll failed to climb as usual one Wednesday morning. But a few days after she was welcomed with a sweet smile and outstretched hands.

"What has kept thee so long, friend Bertha? I have wearied for a sight of thee. None of the nestlings ill, I trust?"

"No! the children are well," said Marjorie's mistress, stooping to kiss the dear face, "but I have been so busy."

Somehow, in the restfulness of that chamber, where the pilgrim whose earthly race was nearly run, lay so quietly, the things that had engrossed Bertha's attention seemed very paltry and small. Like Bunyan's picture of the chamber called Peace, this, too, lay just beside the Delectable Mountains. From this room a view of Immanuel's land could be obtained, and, behold, it was a pleasant country—beautiful with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold.

Always, too, very, very close to the worn right hand lay "those records of antiquity," which are our guide through life.

And, very soon, Mrs. Carroll had out her grievance. Would Miss Benson look at that verse in Jeremiah, and tell her what she thought of it?

Slowly the dim glasses were brightened and settled. Then the little old lady read over the subject carefully.

"Friend Bertha, God has showed thee a gem hidden far down in His mine. This is a new text to me."

Mrs. Carroll felt and looked quite pleased. Miss Benson had so often shown her fresh lights and pictures in the Bible, that it was something to reverse the tables once in a way.

"The question is—what *is* the work of the Lord?" Miss Benson spoke musingly, but Bertha caught her up eagerly.

"That is just it. That is the point that is puzzling me. I love the Lord, and yet I think I am doing nothing for Him."

"Of course you are not." There was a little twinkle in the soft, blue eyes. "It is not for the prince of evil that you tend the lambs of your flock, and hear their prayers, and clothe their bodies, and satisfy their appetites. That is not Satan's work, poor friend! Yet thou hast to do it."

A slightly shocked feeling surged up into Bertha's mind. Then a smile followed.

"I see what you mean, Miss Benson, but just *those* things are not "the work of the Lord."

"Who then has said 'Feed My lambs,' 'Take this child and nurse it for Me,' 'Clothe thy household with double garments'? I think the wise woman was commended, friend Bertha Carroll, for not doing the work of her household negligently."

There was a slight pause as Bertha tried to take her trivial duties once more from God's hand as *His* talent to trade with. But she was not quite clear yet.

"Those things don't mean so much after all, Miss Benson."

"Dear friend"—how loving was the weak voice—"thou condemnest *me* then to the curse. I am doing *nothing* but lying and suffering. 'Life is, to do the will of God,' and I think that is *His work* too."

"But——"

"*No* buts, friend Bertha Carroll. To show thee what I mean, I will tell thee a parable. Many hundred years ago, lived a man called Lawrence. He was only a cook in a monastery, and he wearied much for some work to do for the Lord. To Brother Lawrence appeared an angel, and this was the message given to him: 'You need not a change of *work*, but a change of *motive*.' From that hour Brother Lawrence, instead of cooking to please the friars only, cooked to please God. He has left us a little book entitled 'The Practice of the Presence of God,' and he tells us there how he learned to recognise that Presence even in the kitchen. Will you make this your motto, friend? Not necessarily a change of *work*, but a change of *motive*."

A little more talk and Mrs. Carroll rose to go. Before she did so, however, Miss Benson got out her big dictionary.

"Negligently, carelessly, heedlessly," she read out, and dismissed the burdened young mother with a little joke.

"Don't let those socks be mended carelessly, or that gown pattern be cut out heedlessly. That is the work given thee, and so the 'work of the Lord,' friend Bertha Carroll."

* * * * * *

A few mornings after this, Mrs. Carroll received a note directed in Miss Benson's delicate, old-fashioned writing.

"If you will come to tea with me to-morrow, I will introduce you to the most courageous woman I know. We can talk over thy text a bit, too."

So the next day Mrs. Carroll went to the little house round the corner. No one was there except the curate's wife, who sat with her bonnet off, beside Miss Benson's couch. Bertha knew Mrs. Elliott slightly, and shook hands. Then she waited for the "most courageous woman" to arrive. The little old quaker lady seemed to have forgotten that she expected another guest, for tea was over, and the silver kettle removed before she spoke.

"My greatest friend and the bravest woman I know do not seem to have much to say to each other."

Bertha flushed up uneasily. Did Miss Benson mean that this delicate, quiet Mrs. Elliott was her unknown heroine? She had often seen her in church surrounded by a circle of fair-haired, neatly-garbed youngsters, but, somehow, veiled remarks about the apathy, and the delicacy, and the shyness of the curate's wife were what she chiefly remembered. Mrs. Brown, of the sewing circle, had complained of Mrs. Elliott's neglecting her duties. Mrs. Jones, the choir mistress, had mourned over not having the help of Mrs. Elliott's voice. Mr. Scott, the rector, had apologised for her non-attendance at the Bible classes. She was at the head of no committee, nor at the tail either! What could Miss Benson mean?

Mrs. Elliott herself had made a deprecating movement, and blushed vividly when the old lady spoke, but it did not deter her.

"Yes, friend Bertha Carroll, our minister's wife, here, has been brave enough not to do her work for the Lord negligently.

Then, in the conversation that followed, Bertha learned how Mrs. Elliott had resisted the efforts of well-meaning friends to induce her to take up outside duties.

"I have ten children, Mrs. Carroll, and a small income. So I have determined to look after them and let everything else go."

"Ten children!" repeated Bertha, in rather an awed voice; "what a responsibility."

"Yes, indeed, too great a one to be shifted. Two of my ten"—the mother's eyes filled, and the sensitive mouth quivered—"I have given back to God with my own hands. He has them safe. I trust that none of the rest may be missing when He makes up His jewels."

"Some day, when the birds are fledged, you will find time for other work," said Miss Benson quietly, and was amused at the womanly reply.

"Oh! leave me my babies as long as you can."

One of Bertha Carroll's deepest lessons had been learnt in Miss Benson's drawing-room that day. And, in her Bible afterwards, she strengthened her own impression as to "the work of the Lord." She found that David was called to his high estate while he was acting as shepherd-boy on the hills of Judæa; that the highest praise given to "The friend of God" was because he could order his household and children aright; that John and Peter and James and Matthew were called from their netting needles; and that even after His resurrection, our Lord sanctified daily toil by taking an interest in fishing spoils.

What a wonderful transfiguration of homely duties followed at No. 22. How everything was glorified by a change of centre. And, gradually, the little-known text merged into a more familiar one—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," and "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER.

STARTING forth on life's rough way,
Father, guide them;
Oh, we know not what of harm
May betide them!
'Neath the shadow of Thy wing,
Father, hide them;
Waking, sleeping, Lord, we pray,
Go beside them.

When in prayer they cry to Thee,
Do Thou hear them;
From the stains of sin and shame
Do Thou clear them;
'Mid the quicksands and the rocks
Do Thou steer them;
In temptation, trial, grief,
Be Thou near them.

Unto Thee we give them up:
Lord, receive them.
In the world we know must be
Much to grieve them—
Many striving oft and strong
To deceive them;
Trustful, in Thy hands of love
We must leave them.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

USES OF CHARCOAL.

FEW articles are more useful than charcoal; and its cheapness renders it easy to always have it on hand.

Tainted meat can be sweetened and purified by its use, while fresh meat may be kept sweet with it. Strewn over the skins of birds or mammals it will prevent all unpleasant odours. Foul water is purified by it, and no better known disinfectant can be used than charcoal. It is so porous that it absorbs and condenses gases rapidly. A teaspoonful added to half a glass of water is a remedy for acidity of the stomach, and often relieves a sick headache. It absorbs the gases, and relieves the distended stomach pressing against the nerves. Charcoal laid on a burn causes the pain to abate immediately, and by renewing the application will heal and cure, if it is not too deep, in a few days. It forms an excellent poultice for wounds and sores of all kinds, and in cases of proud flesh it is invaluable. It is often used to purify foul breath and it is a good dentifrice, cleaning the teeth and purifying the gums. It is a very mild household remedy, as it has no disagreeable odour or taste, is not injurious to the colour or texture of anything, and is therefore a simple and safe article to have in every house.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

MANY very striking varieties in colour prevail at present in dress materials and the materials used to combine with them. Orange and dark blue, dark blue and fawn, yellow and moss green, are among the newest. Dress skirts are beginning to be draped in front, and are arranged behind in broad double pleats for the train. The full blouse, and also the long basque bodices, continue to be worn. We hear that the side pieces of the back are to be dispensed with, and only the middle seam is to remain prominent. Open jacket fronts of velvet are worn with a body of this style, under which the bodice fastens invisibly at the side. The skirt trimmings are also of velvet. Princess dresses are very fashionable, and will certainly remain so for some time to come, and we can assure our readers that they may make up their new materials in this style without the least fear of them becoming old-fashioned. The Watteau fold going down the whole of the back to the bottom of the train, gives a very graceful finish to this dress. Of all the many varieties shewn in dress materials, stripes seem to have the preference. Some of these are raised and have a very pretty effect. Even mantles and outdoor wraps are made in striped materials. Children's dresses are often bordered with bands of wide or narrow braid of a contrasting colour, several inches deep, or with dark braid and gold galoon put on to form one, two, or three separate stripes.

Fig. 25.

Figs. 25 and 26 shew two ladies' dresses, both of which were drawn from French models, and have the neat, graceful style about them which characterises most French gowns. Fig. 25 is made in plain and fancy material, both being in shades of brown. This will make an economical dress, as no other trimming will be required. The skirt is lined throughout with alpaca, and is plain in front and laid in double pleats at the back. An opening is made at the side over a sort of gusset piece of the plain material. A band of the plain stuff also faces the skirt, about six inches deep. For the body the first thing is to get a lining to fit well, over this the back pieces must be well tacked, then the fronts, which fasten invisibly at the side, are draped with plaid at the sides, and also the full front, while the plain square front, collar and bands are of the plain stuff. A large puff is used at the top of the sleeve, which can be in plain or fancy material. This dress takes three yards of plain and four yards of fancy material.

Fig. 27.

Fig. 28.

Fig. 26 was taken from a model in black silk, with front, collar and cuffs, and band of jet. The body fastens at the side, and the fulness of the left side is brought over and hooked under the right arm. Should cloth be used for this design, the front, cuffs, and Medici band might be made of velvet or silk. The dress will take fourteen yards if made in silk; if in cashmere or cloth seven yards will be required, and one yard of velvet. The children's dresses are of the blouse order, and will do in washing cotton or a warmer material. Fig. 27 has a full gathered yoke, below which is a frill of silk, or stuff pinked out, about four inches wide. Under this the full skirt piece is put on and drawn in at the waist with a ribbon, which fastens with bows at the back.

Fig. 28 is made on a square yoke, and is trimmed with feather stitching in coarse silk. Bands of the material let in under the yoke confine the velvet or ribbon which draws the blouse in at the waist. Fig. 29 shows a lady's bib apron made in unbleached linen canvas, and trimmed with fancy cotton, printed in stripes.

Flat patterns, Figs. 25 and 26, 6½d. each; Figs. 27, 28 and 29, 4½d. each. Also Princess dress, with Watteau back, 6½d. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row.

Fig. 29.